



COMMISSION ON
ASIAN PACIFIC

CAPAA

AMERICAN AFFAIRS

Improving the lives of Asian Pacific Americans

May 2004

Volume 5, Issue 1

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Community Members and Friends,

While there have been many changes in our organization, CAPAA continues to improve the well-being of Asian Pacific Americans (APAs) in Washington. Improvements are made through new concentrations such as economic development, as well as more established methods such as community outreach and participation in the legislative process.

Economic development has been an added dimension to our efforts for good reason. With minority-businesses, we recognize an alarming decline in the number that contract with state and public agencies, as well as a decline in the number that access state business services. Our goal is to improve state contracting opportunities and to streamline the minority-business certification process. The first step was taken on June 30, 2003 with the State's first Diversity Business Symposium held at North Seattle Community College. Minority-businesses were invited to learn more about the process of state contracting, meet representatives from state and local agencies, and give feedback regarding barriers to contracting. With its success, five additional Diversity Business Symposiums followed throughout the State, with more planned for the future.

The Hmong American community has been an ongoing focus for the CAPAA's community outreach. While the Hmong Americans represent only one of over thirty-two separate ethnic groups in our APA population, the CAPAA commits itself to identify and understand the individual needs among every group. Some of the needs addressed include: access to farmland and irrigation water through a partnership formed between the State, King County and Snohomish County; English as a second language (ESL) instruction with an emphasis on farming; technical assistance in starting small business; and support with extending the Hmong Veterans' Naturalization Act.

Sincerely,


Ellen M. Abellera

Washington State Legislature

The following are 2004 Washington State Legislature highlights of interest to the APA community. For more information about these and other bills, please go to <http://leg.wa.gov/>.

Bills Tracked by the CAPAA

- ◆ **HB 1828:** Requiring that insurance coverage for mental health services be at parity with medical and surgical services.
- ◆ **HB 2195:** Signed by the Governor - Provides four chances for students to retake the 10th-grade WASL.
- ◆ **HB 2776 / SB 6572:** State policy to set a dedicated source of funding to increase treatment services for problem gamblers.
- ◆ **HB 2784 / SB 6627:** Signed by the Governor - Creating a small business incubator program.
- ◆ **HB 2906:** Increasing the funding for the linked deposit program for minority and women's business loans.
- ◆ **HJM 4041:** Signed by the Governor - Relief for the Aganda family of Selah, Washington.
- ◆ **SB 6161:** Signed by the Governor - Directing the Washington State Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs to come up with a model policy for staff training, reporting requirements and procedures for investigating allegations of domestic violence involving officers.
- ◆ **SB 6268 / HB 2700:** Permitting a college or university to maintain a diverse student population by considering race, color, ethnicity, or national origin in the admission process.
- ◆ **SB 6384:** Signed by the Governor - Imposing penalties against convicted domestic violence offenders to pay for domestic violence programs.

Supplemental Budget

- ◆ **Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Pathway Program - Increase of \$2M through the general fund state budget.** Provides funding to continue specialized employment services through the WorkFirst/LEP Pathway program for refugees and other limited-English-proficient families and individuals that receive Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), State Family Assistance, or Refugee Cash Assistance benefits. Provided services include, but are not limited to, English as a second language (ESL) training, job placement assistance, and work support services.

Note: HB=House Bill; HJM=House Joint Memorial; SB=Senate Bill.

I n T h i s I s s u e

- Page 1 Message From The Director
- Page 2 Washington's Hmong Farmers
- Page 3 Hmong Americans

Washington's Hmong Farmers

By Steve Evans, King County Farm Specialist

Hmong farmers have become an important part of the local agricultural community. They keep hundreds of acres in farming and generate vital income for their families. Protecting and preserving our local farms is vital and means fresher produce, open green spaces, economic diversity, and a safe, continuing food supply for the State.

Indochinese Farm Project

Between 1982 and 1989, the Indochinese Farm Project (IFP) was a non-profit training program, providing culturally and technically appropriate alternatives to enhance the Hmong tradition of agriculture. On an 18-acre parcel of land along the Sammamish River south of Woodinville, the newly arriving Hmong community was trained by the IFP in farming and marketing methods. The IFP began with six Hmong families and would eventually help over thirty become self-sufficient.

Further, the IFP helped the Hmong join the day tables at the Pike Place Market, providing the opportunity for them to sell produce directly to the public. Today there are about sixty-three Hmong families farming in King County and Snohomish County. Most of the farmers raise flowers and vegetables on small acreages and sell their products directly to customers at farmers markets and from on-farm stands.

Community Supported Agriculture

On any given day at the Pike Place Market, one out of every two farmers is Hmong. The Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program of the Pike Place Market creates a direct connection between consumers in the local community and small farmers such as the Hmong.

The community can join as a member of CSA and pay in advance for a share of the farmers' harvest. In return, for the twenty-week growing season, members receive weekly market baskets of fruit and vegetable from over two dozen Pike Place Market farmers. Members also receive information on where their food comes from and how it is produced.

Farmers, in turn, receive working capital in the spring when they need it most – literally seed money. Further, these stewards of Washington's farmland practice sustainable agriculture and ensure the future of local farming.

For details on the CSA program, please contact:

**Market Basket CSA
Pike Place Market PDA
85 Pike Street, Room 500
Seattle, WA 98101**

**http://www.pikeplacemarket.org/shop/market_basket/
phone: (206) 774-5239
e-mail: csa@pikeplacemarket.org**

Puget Sound Fresh

Established in 1997 and supported by a partnership between King County and Snohomish County, Puget Sound Fresh (PSF) is a marketing program that helps to preserve local farming and farmland. The program encourages consumers, wholesalers, retailers and restaurants to seek out and purchase locally grown products. More recently, the program also supports the protection of farmland throughout the Puget Sound area through various open space and farmland preservation programs.

A number of the participating farmers are Hmong with approximately 200 farms in all. Farmers that participate in the program raise and harvest crops and animals in one of the twelve counties that border the Puget Sound.

Benefits of the program include a comprehensive listing on the PSF website and the ability to use the Puget Sound Fresh logo on packaging, advertising, and banners used at farm markets. By looking for and purchasing products identified with the Puget Sound Fresh logo, customers can help preserve local agriculture, including farms owned and operated by the Hmong community.



For more information about this program as well as participating local farms, please visit the PSF website at www.pugetsoundfresh.org or contact Steven Evans at (206) 296-7824, steve.evans@metrokc.gov.

Farmland Forum

On April 22, 2004, Hmong farmers gathered to discuss their longstanding needs for land and irrigation water in the Puget Sound area. Their needs were heard by representatives from the CAPAA, Snohomish County, King County, the Washington State Department of Agriculture, and the Cascade Harvest Coalition. From this discussion, action items were developed to help secure long-term stability for the Hmong farming in the State.

- ❖ Identify available land in Snohomish County and a process for the Hmong to lease county owned property.
- ❖ Identify State owned land available for Hmong farming.
- ❖ Survey Hmong community to determine where they are farming, what their continuing needs are, and identify Hmong who are not currently farming but wish to farm.
- ❖ Secure federal grants for Hmong farmers.
- ❖ Provide workshops through the FarmLink program on organic certification and water rights.

It is our hope that Hmong farmers will be successful in their desire to establish self-sustained agricultural businesses. However, continued assistance from both public and private entities is crucial in addressing their needs.

Hmong Americans

By Ryan Minato, Research Analyst

Immigration

Nearly all Hmong Americans are from Southeast Asia where they existed as farmers, living in rural areas and highlands. However, during the Vietnam War, the Hmong provided essential combat, reconnaissance and recovery support for US forces. With the withdrawal of US forces, the Hmong were subject to violence and retribution with tens of thousands forced to escape to Thailand where they were confined to overcrowded refugee camps. As new governments emerged in Southeast Asia, President Ford authorized refugees to enter the US in 1975, including the first wave of Hmong.

The Refugee Act of 1980 allowed entry based on persecution of race, religion, nationality, or political opinion. That same year, admissions peaked with 27,000 Hmong entering the US. Admissions between 1987 and 1994 were largely based on family reunification, with another 56,000 Hmong accepted during that time. After 1994, most refugee camps in Thailand were empty and admissions remained low, especially compared to other Southeast Asian groups.

By 2000, there were 169,428 Hmong Americans counted in the US Census, representing an increase of nearly 90 percent from 1990. While many agree that the figure is probably a significant undercount, these demographic trends suggest the Hmong American population will continue to be among the fastest growing APA groups in the US.

Occupation

Hmong Americans have lagged significantly behind in economic status, faced with the lowest educational attainment and per capita income even compared to other APA groups. Unemployment for Hmong in Washington is high, 14.3 percent, with more than 36 percent of Hmong families living below the poverty level. As a result, one out of four families receive public assistance income in the State. However, these are improvements when compared to figures from a decade ago and a sign of increased stability for Hmong Americans.

Early on, the Hmong community was known to follow their tradition of farming here in the US. Farms mainly grow flowers and some organic vegetables to be sold at the market, often revitalizing agriculture in places it had been abandoned. However, since many Hmong families earn income from farming as a secondary occupation, the Census does not reflect this, showing only .3 percent of Hmong as employed in farming, forestry and fishing industries.

More recently in the community, younger Hmong Americans have made rapid growth in labor force participation and income. The community as a whole benefits from emerging small business, many agriculturally based, and college-educated professionals going into fields like law, medicine, and non-profit management.

Community

With the first immigrant wave that arrived, resettlement agencies dispersed Hmong Americans around the country. However, many wished to reunite their community and live in cultural enclaves, leading to a massive shift of the population in the mid-to-late 1980s to Central California and, to a lesser extent, to Minnesota and Wisconsin.

Between 1996 and 2001 there was an exodus of 40,000 Hmong from California due to welfare reform, unemployment and a high cost of living. Today, the largest Hmong community is in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area of Minnesota, more than doubling since the 1990 Census. California remains the state with the largest concentration of Hmong Americans, most notably the San Joaquin Valley.

In Washington, the Hmong primarily settled in the Seattle area, the rural community of Carnation in King County, as well as in Spokane. During the 1982 recession, federal resettlement grants were cut and most left the area in search of work with only a few hundred remaining. A strong population recovery in the State is evident as the Hmong community numbers 1,294 in Census 2000, up from 741 in 1990. In the State and across the US, this post-immigration growth is driven largely by increased numbers of children.

The average Hmong family lives in a household of six people. With more than half under the age of 18, Hmong families have a greater amount of economic dependents. Today, over half own their home – a vast rise in ownership over the past decade, but still short of the State average.

This tight-knit community may be most visible during their largest festival celebrated, Lunar New Year, known as *Xyoo Tshiab*. While some in the Hmong community look to change their cultural aspects that clash with the mainstream, New Year is still celebrated as a time of togetherness and courtship. The Hmong's renowned tradition of needlework is commonly displayed as clothing or tapestry this time of year, carried forward as a representation of family origin.

Linguistic Isolation

More than a third (35.3 percent) of Hmong American households reported linguistic isolation in the 2000 US Census, that is, everyone age 14 and over speaks English less than “very well” in the home. Hmong Americans have the highest linguistic isolation rate of any APA group recorded by the US Census. English-speaking ability is a critical issue in the US, determining educational attainment, labor force participation and occupation advancement.

Sources: US Census Bureau; AsianWeek, *The New Face of Asian Pacific America*, 2003; Mark E. Pfeifer, Hmong Resource Center; Blla Xiong, *The Hmong New Year: The Family and the Festival*; Chandler Felt, King County Demographer. Photos courtesy of Dean Wong.

The State of Washington

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In this issue:
❖ Washington's Hmong Farmers
❖ Hmong Americans

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Calendar and Selected Community Events

Ongoing through Dec. 12 – Beyond Talk: Redrawing Race art exhibit exploring issues of race and race relations; Wing Luke Asian Museum, 407 - 7 Ave. S, Seattle; Contact: Cassie Chinn, (206) 623-5124 x 131, cchinn@wingluke.org.

Jun. 5 – Chinese Culture & Arts Day with lion dance, martial arts, songs and exhibits, presented by the Chinese Cultural Association; Seattle Center, 12 - 4 PM, FREE; Contact: (206) 684-7200.

Jun. 12-13 – Pagdiriwang Philippine Festal, a celebration of Philippine independence with performances; Seattle Center House, Fisher Pavilion, all day, FREE; Contact: (206) 684-7200.

Jun. 26 – Walk for Rice walk-a-thon hosted by the Asian Counseling and Referral Service; Seward Park, 5900 Lake Washington Blvd. S, 8 AM - 12 PM; Contact: (206) 695-7551, www.walkforrice.com.

Jun. 26 – Friendship Dinner & Auction hosted by the Chinese Information and Service Center; Sheraton Hotel & Tower, 1400 - 6 Ave., 5:30 PM; Contact: Debbie, (206) 624-5633 x112, debbieh@cisc-seattle.org.

Jul. 10-11 – Seattle's Chinatown-International District Summer Festival with entertainment, street fair and food court; Hing Hay Park, 423 Maynard Ave. S, Saturday: 11 AM - 8 PM, Sunday: 11 AM - 6 PM, FREE; Contact: (206) 382-1197.

Aug. 1 – Pista sa Nasyon, Filipino American festival with music, dancing, and food booths; Seward Park Amphitheatre, 5900 Lake Washington Blvd. S, 9 AM - 8 PM, FREE; Contact: Bengie Santos, (206) 296-4004, www.pista.org.

Aug. 6 – From Hiroshima to Hope annual lantern floating remembrance with family-oriented programs; Green Lake, 7312 W Green Lake Dr. N, 6:30 PM., FREE; Contact: Wing Luke Asian Museum, (206) 623-5124.

Aug. 28-29 – TibetFest with performance, Tibetan-style bazaar, food and children's activities; Seattle Center House, Fisher Pavilion, all day, FREE; Contact: (206) 444-4059, www.tibetaninwashington.com.

Sept. 11 – Korean Harvest Festival Day (Ch'usok) with half-day performances hosted by the Korean-American Artists Association; Seattle Center House, FREE; Contact: (206) 684-7200.

Oct. 1-2 – Multicultural Conference by the Washington State Association for Multicultural Education; Central Washington University, 400 E University Way, Ellensburg; Contact: Barbara Yasui, (360) 657-0219, barbara_yasui@msvl.k12.wa.us.

Nov. 6 – Hmong New Year Celebration with cultural activities and exhibits hosted by the Hmong Association of Washington; Seattle Center House, FREE; Contact: (206) 684-7200.



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